

V. *An account of the Poyson Wood Tree in New-England. By the Honourable Paul Dudley, Esq, F. R. S. Communicated by John Chamberlain, Esq;*

THE Poyson-Wood-Tree grows only in Swamps, or low wet Grounds, and is something like a small Ash, but much more like a *Sumack*, and therefore is by some called the *Swamp Sumack*, for the Twiggs, Leaves, and Shape are exactly like the *Sumack*, and it likewise bears a dry Berry.

It never grows bigger than a Man's Leg, nor taller than Alder, but spreads much, and several together, especially about the Stump or Roots of one that is cut down; as it is of quick growth, so it does not last long; the inside of the Wood is yellow and very full of Juice, as glutinous as Honey or Turpentine; the Wood itself has a very strong unsavory Smell, but the Juice stinks as bad as Carrion. Having thus described the Tree, we shall now proceed to give an account of its Poisonous Quality, &c.

I. And first, it must be observed, that it poysons two ways, either by touching or handling of it, or by the Smell; for the Scent of it, when cut down in the Woods, or on the Fire, has poisoned Persons to a very great degree. One of my Neighbours was blind for above a Week together, with only hand-

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ling it. And a Gentleman in the Country, sitting by his Fire-side in the Winter, was swelled for several Days with the Smoak or Flame of some Poyson-Wood that was in the Fire.

2. A second thing to be remarked of the Poyson-Wood is, that it has this effect only on some particular Persons and Constitutions; for I have seen my own Brother not only handle, but chew it without any harm at all. And so by the same Fire one shall be poysoned and another not at all affected.

3. But then Thirdly, this sort of Poyson is never Mortal, and will go off in a few Days of it self, like the Sting of a Bee; but generally the Person applies Plantain Water, or Sallet-Oyl and Cream.

4. As to its Operation, within a few Hours after the Person is poysoned, he feels an itching Pain that provokes a Scratching, which is followed by an Inflammation and Swelling; sometimes a Man's Legs only have been poysoned, and have run with Water.

My Neighbour that was so sadly poysoned with handling it, told me one thing very remarkable of the Wood, and that is, that when he touched it, he plainly perceiv'd it to differ from the other Wood, that he was throwing up into his Cart; for it was as cold as a piece of Ice; and withal assured me, he could distinguish it blindfold, or in the dark, from any other Wood in the World, by its Coldness; but the poor Man is as much afraid of it, when he goes into the Woods, as of a Rattle-Snake. He further tells me, that he felt an itching in a few Hours after he had handled the Wood, but the swelling did not come on till in about three Days.

*Paul Dudley.*

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